Gender as a Soft Assembly: Tomboys' Stories
Adrienne Harris, Ph.D.

This article draws on a study of tomboys to reflect on developmental theory in psychoanalysis. To illuminate the power of chaos theory and nonlinear dynamic systems theory in understanding gender and sexuality, I trace three lines of theoretical work on gender, relevant to conceptualizing tomboy love and tomboy identity. First, I reexamine the work on gender development in which bodily life as the wellspring and organizer of gender is prominent. The second strand begins with the organization of gender development proposed by Stoller (1976) and taken up and developed by Fast (1984). Its most articulated form is in the work of Benjamin (1988, 1993). This line of argument conceptualizes gender development through the pattern of relationships and the resultant identifications. The third strand concerns the understanding of “masculinity” in women and the evolution of work on bisexuality.

My immersion in chaos theory and the study of nonlinear dynamic systems came out of work I began to do on tomboys. As I began to listen in clinical situations, to reflect on my own tomboy history, and to read, I began to experience a great and persistent difficulty in mapping the tomboy to the gender narratives that are usual within psychoanalysis or within feminism. Tomboys did not seem to be quiet and obedient category occupiers.

I feel I am at the center of a paradox. The tomboy plays with gender conventions, crosses gender borders both in pleasure and pain. She

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constructs a space between categories, a place to draw a little breath of air. But looked at from another perspective, some tomboys are embedded in stereotype. Tomboy life can be as airless as a bell jar. Gender conflicts can feel suffocating and rigid. Tomboy identity can feel like a rigid but beloved carapace or a nasty introject worthy only of hatred and expulsion. Alternatively, the tomboy persona can be a claim for action and mobility, a site of doubleness and multiplicity itself. These shifts go on within one life and across different stories and histories. A tomboy can appear simultaneously to refuse conventions and gender coherences and swallow them whole. Gender conformist and gender outlaw.

One can see gender bouncing and shifting through the Oxford English Dictionary’s definitional history of the etymology of tomboy: “1599: A rude and forward boy; 1592: a wild romping girl; 1700: a bold or immodest woman.” A girl who behaves like a spirited or boisterous boy. Over the top even for a boy. Subtly and inexorably as the definition moves through historical time, it akes on transgressive and sexual terms. And this use of “tom” stretches between the wildness of tomcat and the compliance of Uncle Tom. “Tom” probably also derives from the saint’s name, a saint often known as “doubting Thomas.” The very name Tom evokes uncertainty and marginality.

Although my own identification as tomboy goes back a long way, my professional preoccupations began when I responded to an offer to comment on Susan Coates’s (1991, 1995) work on gender identity. I felt that I did have something to say about her work but was just at the beginning of thinking about tomboys. Several months later I forgot that I had been so diluent and circumspect, and, thinking, “Oh, this will be fun” and, at the least, that it was a year away, I agreed to write a paper. But over the next months I came to feel more and more beleaguered and uncertain. I felt in over my head but stoically determined to tough it out. This is one of my tomboy tropes. Tough, competitive, stoic, a little mindless bravado. One of the most striking adult forms this “jump now, worry later” style took was a decision I made quite spontaneously (a.k.a. unconsciously) standing on a line at registration quite late in my graduate school career when immaturity could not be an excuse. I insisted that the University of Michigan men’s lacrosse team let me join the team and play. I was plunged into the fascinating world of Big Ten NCAA sports in the throes of Title IX paranoia. It was 1970.

Tense interviews with coaches and athletic directors followed. I listened to a rather exhausted looking woman swim coach describe the fundraising efforts of the women’s team: bake sales at swim meet intermissions. I watched the arrogant director of men’s athletics signing checks and vouchers for the football players, those gods of Michigan

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outfitted with their own new cars and giant playbooks, possessors of such nonchalant, sauntering walks into their training quarters.
or daily practice. Local folklore had it that the Michigan team had an employee whose sole job was to fix or pay the team's traffic tickets. Such was the fantasy and sense of potency surrounding the male athlete's privilege. The athletic director barely looked up from his desk as he forbade me to join the team. I said, "Well, fine. Put it in writing." This was the fall of 1970, a brief historical moment when patriarchy was actually fearful of feminism. Title IX had put all federal research funds at risk if it could be demonstrated that sex discrimination existed at an institution receiving federal money. The director and I glared at each other across the suddenly intractable divide of gender, but he did not take up my challenge. I had apparently prevailed.

But then I had to play lacrosse. I had neglected to notice that while my girls' boarding school played an intense, hard-running, tenacious stick-handling version of the game, for men it was a contact sport. If macho had plunged me into this trouble, grit and stoic tough-girl style saw me through it. By season's end, I had calves that were astonishing, bruises everywhere, and an interesting worm's-eye view of the power and anonymity of masks and protective padding as well as the particular magic surrounding male athletes. I noticed that the men playing lacrosse (who were divided between protective-ness and fury in relation to me) had a much easier time overcoming the perhaps slender prohibition on hitting girls than I had overcoming the prohibition on hitting anyone. I learned a great deal about Rough and Tumble Play, that signifying symptom of Gender Identity Disorder, and expanded the range of what I could tolerate and bounce back from. I came to feel very pleasurably strong and physically resilient.

The concept of mastery came to have a highly physical cathexis for me. I felt in possession of a body image formed and streamlined away from the objectifying male gaze that stains and maintains so much in female subjectivity. Body image and self-state were focused and delineated by the impact of flesh on flesh, muscle to muscle, the body mixup and shocks that do not usually arrive for women outside the funhouse or the bedroom. I had never understood the exhilaration and power of physical contact sports, despite a lifetime of those more distant rather than proximal competitions, that is, tennis or those earlier forms of women's basketball where you could not move or make physical contact. I understood as never before how much the physicality of sport was another instance of Winnicott's (1950) concept of the power of well-managed aggression. This kind of pleasurable aggression can be vicariously felt in any viewing of the current version of professional women's basketball or soccer or women's boxing, but 30 years ago it was a revelation.

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Like my trials on the lacrosse team, writing and working on tomboys has taken me beyond where I feel I can easily go. Writing about tomboys turns out to be a kind of contact sport. To work on this topic I have had to confront theories of development, ideas about gender and identity and identity formation, ideas about language and its relation to identity, questions of voice in scholarly essays.

Tomboys' Stories

Tomboys' stories and the analyst/listener's interpretive narratives are all tangled in the rules and conventions of gender and gender growth. I like Adam Phillips's (1995) idea that "all symptoms, after all, are states of conviction" (p. 184). Behind one tomboy's "guv" persona is the deep conviction that women are second-class citizens, losers, uninteresting. "Guyness" is the only site of excitement. Within another tomboy's inner experience, there is the horrifying conviction that the "boy," a self-state that feels male to her, is a degraded infantile parasite. For this woman, the avowed identification is a torment. What men and boys get from women, she fervently believes, is an unending maternal succor, an idealized, tantalizing maternal breast offered only to boys. But her longings are a source of despair and self-beratement. In her case, infantilise longing may have been retrospectively masculinized and enviously hated, an example perhaps of nachtraglichkeit, deferred action and also perhaps an envy of one part of the self for another.

A tomboy's masculinity may contain her fascination with men, her rivalry, her fascinated rivalry, or her disavowal and avoidance of men. A tomboy may feel entranced by male power or make fun of it. In considering who the tomboy does identify with and who the tomboy does want, there may be instances in which identification and desire become less easily distinguishable processes. The tomboy's identity may be as an objectified source of desire initially set in play by a parent, father or mother, or by a sibling. In considering desire and identity as emergent from relationships and relational interpersonal patterns, the desire of the parent, in whatever form, is powerful in the constituting of sexuality. Powerful but not predictable.

The force of parental desire, in whatever its guise and to whatever aspect of the child it is directed, has been refocused for psychoanalytic theory by Laplanche's (1989) work on maternal seduction. Although Laplanche's concept of the enigmatic signifier diminishes maternal erotic subjectivity, making a mother's libidinizing of her baby almost an inadvertent act, he does press psychoanalysts to consider the inevitable consequences of parental desire as a necessary component of any subjectivity. The powerful interplay of conscious and unconscious experience of sensory enmeshment and passion in the mother-child matrix has been very carefully elaborated in the work of Wrye and Welles (1995). This process, whether provocatively called seduction or more neutrally termed sensory enmeshment, is a potent aspect of the environmental matrix in which gender and sexuality will arise and be constituted. This aspect of the early relational dyad inevitably contributes to the temperature and quality of an analytic dyad. A tomboy's body ego, then, may be libidinized through a variety of powerful fantasies and transactions.
emergent within her relationships. Laplanche (1989) did not reference Bion in his work, but Bion's (1959) concept of parental 
\'everie, the necessary imaginative work that comes to constitute a space both internal and interpersonal for any child, must also be 
mrippled in this process.

The tomboy's identity may be mimetically established in relation to the most vital, alive, or free and loving aspects of her 
primary figures, and one might find that this masculine self had been constituted in relation to "masculinity" in either the mother or 
the father. Some tomboys may evolve a male persona or self-state over time; for others the persona seems arrested in a particular 
context or style of developmental moment. For instance, B feels the power and liberation of action and a butch identity; but, when I 
ink some features of her identification to her conflicts in having to care for and nurse a chronically and progressively debilitated 
mother and be the object of that anger, desperate mother's rage, B thinks perhaps I think her conflicts with her mother led to her 
being gay. And she tells me this, adding "I just thought I was lucky because I was born that way." Tomboy as lucky chance for 
freedom. Benjamin (1995), in outlining the great salutary possibility of a father's identification with a daughter as agent, may be 
hearing one conduit for tomboy identity. Later in B's work on her history with her mother, though, memories of a healthier more 
rigorous figure emerged behind the memories and experiences of her mother's illness. That lost figure, funny, boisterous, on the 
30, very actively alive has been held by B mimetically perhaps as a lost identification-masculinity from the mother. In B's mental 
architecture, feminine came to be ill and damaged, masculine to be vital and related. Although there have been many difficult or 
"salutary consequences for holding this binary, what she termed phallic or masculine was drawn from both parents and came to 
dominate her way of being and of loving.

Some tomboys do a disappearing act at adolescence. Do some tomboys suffer the fate traced in Gilligan, Lyon, and Hammer's 
(1990) work on adolescence: the dip in confidence many young women feel and report? Interestingly, loss of "voice," of self-
esteeem and confidence, is most acute for the most conventionally feminine girls. For some adolescents being a tomboy may 
protect the self. Some tomboys may

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disappear into disguise, like Riviere's (1929) power femme, that masquerading woman Riviere saw as cloaking her masculinity in a 
kinds of hyperfemmes drag.

Psychoanalysis makes us rightly suspicious of disappeared identities. Is the tomboy a developmental anomaly, carrying the 
eftover rebellion or expansiveness of adolescence into adulthood? Is she a historical anomaly, living as an internal consequence 
he external socially driven rigidities of gender? In a social world where athletics, for example, are not rigidly gendered and 
women's athleticism spreads into many venues, will the social aggression and militancy of rough-and-tumble play need to be seen 
as a gender violation? Will a different history of the tomboy's body and her body in motion alter the gender implications for a young 
woman?

A tomboy identity can be either moving in time or fixed, transcendent, or terrified: tomboy jock taking cultural and physical 
space to move and play and express sanctioned forms of militancy and aggression; tomboy as excess, as conveyer and bearer of 
ouissance, containing and expressing both genders, both desires, object and subject. This doubling of identity might have a 
number of meanings and implications. The tomboy may open a space for herself to move and act, at least in her imagination, less 
rigidly anchored to binary categories and living in the space between masculinity and femininity.

To make a theoretical and practical space for the multiplicity of genderedness and of sexual practices and meanings in 
boys, I draw on Bromberg's (1999) work on multiple self-states in clinical psychoanalysis. He sees "the experience of selfhood as 
the kind of creative inferiority that permits permeability of the boundary between inside and outside, without threat to self 
continuity" (p. 283). The tomboy's identity, a boy in a girl, a boy and a girl, a girl and more than a girl, a girl whose phallic activities 
may be dystonic or syntonic, these are all shifting self-states at play.

For some tomboys, the identity must take on physicality and bodily form. In a certain way, tomboy experiences are part of a 
broader range of experiences that effectively make problematic the whole idea of "the body" (Grosz, 1994; Harris, 1999). It is 
certainly a stretch to extend the definition of tomboy to transgender experience, but the struggles and questions and 
concretizations around body-states for some tomboys and for some transgender persons may be comparable. In transgender 
experience, the chance to be a boy physically or at least psychically may offer what seems the only hope for sanity, for coherence 
and safety. While a full conversation between transgender witnesses and psychoanalysts is still to be held, there is a gender 
conformity and a gender rebellion to transgendering and perhaps also an idealization of medical technology or surgery as phallic 
solutions.

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**Tomboys and Trauma**

"So I'd think about praying to be changed into a boy" (Faulkner, 1931, p. 260)

That is Temple Drake's voice in Faulkner's novel Sanctuary. A patient reminds me of this passage in the midst of a very 
\'harmless and laconic vision of her treatment as she feels poised between the constriction and limits of an asexual boyhood and the imagined 
error of being and feeling feminine. Temple is in the barn. She knows she will be raped. "That was when I got to thinking a funny

http://www.pep-web.org/document.php?id=sgs.001.0223a&type=hitlist&num=0&query=zone1%3Article... 2/20/200
thing. You know how you do when you're scared. I was looking at my legs, and I'd try to make like I was a boy. I was thinking about if I just was a boy and then I tried to make myself into one by thinking. So I'd think about praying to be changed into a boy and then I would pray and then I would sit right still and wait" (pp. 259-260). As Popeye approaches, Temple drifts into a dissociated state, envisioning alter identities. She could be an old woman, an old man, and then, almost dreamily, as she floats away from her situation, she imagines amusedly what will happen when Popeye discovers she is a boy.

The patient alerting me to this passage in the novel does not know why or how her boy-self first appeared. Perhaps, as Faulkner seems to suggest, being a boy is instead of remembering, a way not to notice. Boyhood does not express simply the danger of femininity but forecloses memory and thinking. Certainly the experience of being poised to enter a female space, but purified and disabled from imagining growth in any direction, has transformed my patient into a raging mad person, fearing her sanity. Our interaction has become the site of abandonment and danger. I am worse than useless. I seem to be the replication of a woman who refuses to notice danger, a good German refusing to notice "the smell of burning flesh." No longer her helpful, useful analyst, I am a woman deeply and dangerously ignorant of the life and body-threatening dangers all women face.

Her self-state (which exists in concert with other, more adult, functional ways of being) as little boy child is an identity she despises and feels trapped in. Assembled for the management of trauma and danger, it is gender as an unusually elaborated and subtle security operation. In two consultations I did a number of years ago, two young women, although quite different in a number of ways, both sought gender surgery, though with some trepidation. Both people had impecalable and bedrock reasons to say that, from their experience, it was both degrading and dangerous to be a girl. A boy-identity was literal and psychic survival. Terror at passivity and incorporation, terror at violation and vulnerability could apparently only be dissolved

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by some change in bodily character. It would make sense that a defense against annihilation might require something on the order of Schaefer's (1968) definition of incorporation: incorporation involves a concrete fantasy of taking on or becoming, in an embodied way, the corporeal elements of another in order to regulate an anxiety lived in relation to the body and its safety.

Tomboy body ego may function as a defense against trauma, either remembered or reproduced. One aspect of tomboy identity may be that activity defends against the danger of penetration and damage, which may or may not be initially gendered or sexualized but may come to be postdated as male or boyish or phallic. A tomboy may oscillate between rigidity and activity as pulverawks against memory or fear of annihilation. The body braces the psyche and frames ways of seeing and being seen. Constituted by the gaze, we may (fruitlessly or successfully) craft our bodies in an attempt to control the gaze of the onlooker, to disappear or to push ourselves right in the face of the viewer. In the dialectic of seeing and being seen, the body is the receiving and transmitting instrument, and a tomboy, through her body-state, both rigid and yet softly assembled, struggles in the rough-and-tumble of visual contact. In fact, one might argue this point with regard to any woman given that the female body is so strongly objectified in this cultural matrix.

For any of the particular dynamics I have been describing one has to wonder, why mark any of these activities or internal spaces as masculine or phallic or somewhere among the many linguistic representations that help regulate and constitute masculinity? Any of these experiences which a tomboy claims for her tomboyhood could be, in another person, happily or unhappily ungendered or ego-syntonically feminine. Terms like "masculinity" and "femininity" are very context sensitive, taking on a distinct coloration and particular networks of meaning within particular life-worlds. One sets the terms in quotation marks to signal both the irony and the qualifications attached. Feminine qualities or experience will likely be distinct and different in a man or in a woman. As long as one attends to the local, historic, and contingent experiences in which these terms and experiences circulate, it seems to me one can make rich use of the specificity of genderedness without being absorbed in universal generic categories. Gender terms will, of course, bring their own political baggage into our theoretical discourses. It is crucial only that the politics of gender not be imported seamlessly and unironically into our understandings. A tomboy's gender construction, desire, and character are not universal or transcultural forms. The developmental modeling that I think can be useful clinically only advances contingent, historically placed claims.

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**Gender as a Soft Assembly**

What kind of gender-identity theory could these narrative possibilities benefit from? What sort of developmental story could be woven here? Or, to ask another question, how do these stories of women's complex relationship to ideas about masculinity, what I am summarizing as tomboys' stories, illuminate the gaps in our theoretical narratives, force a rethinking? The tomboy's experience and story is embedded in a culture and gender and language world in which she is both understood and misunderstood and, in any case, constituted. I have used the variation within and between tomboys to try to destabilize psychoanalytic developmental theory, to ask more questions than I can answer.

I have been drawing on dynamic systems theory, the forms of chaos theory particularly developed by Telen and Smith (1991), to imagine these multiplicities of developmental outcomes. Their general-systems approach would see phenomenon like gender or sexual desire not as structure but, rather, as "softly assembled" sets of behavioral attractors whose form and stability would be quite variable, depending on the task at hand, the context, and the individual's life history and experiences. With this approach...
variability of pathway and of experience are privileged. Sedgwick (1990) notes, perhaps with some irony, that some people are more gendered than others. We could amend this statement to say that gender saturation varies across situations and tasks, and no doubt across cultures and historical time. It is not that all persons have multiple and fluid gender experiences and shifting or labile constellations of experience that come to be gendered, it is only that this variation is expectable within the framework of chaos theory and would alter (though not dispense with) the normative qualities and features of psychoanalytic theory.

Chaos theory has turned out to be a model of very wide applicability in a variety of disciplines. It permits highly complex modeling of systems in which novelty, self-organization, and self-maintenance occur. Developing or emerging systems are not predetermined or predictable from some originary point but evolve in the context of local, context-specific constraints. Structures mental and physical are characterized both by stabilities and by instabilities, and change is nonlinear, by which is meant that the impact of change is not simply predictable and aggregated. Small shifts can disqualify a system in gross and dramatic ways, and systems restabilize through feedback that may have features of either randomness or guided searches. This is a theory of human functioning that is deterministic but not causal or teleological. Inherent in this way of thinking about structures is a paradox: human experience emerges from deterministic chaos, from the mutual elaboration of randomness and pattern.

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Thelen and Smith (1991) are opposed to global, universalizing claims; they stress the fluidity of experiences of self. The multiplicity and shifting experiences of change and growth need not lead to a trivialized relativism, nor to a fetishizing of multiplicities, nor to an anarchy of self-states, nor to a retreat from agency, responsibility, or ethics. Elegant regularities of pattern emerging from complex, multisystem interactions produce robust, stable regularities of experience and personality. What is fascinating about chaos theory is its even-handedness both toward character that is quite rigid and continuous and toward character that is noisy, fluctuating, labile, even in the same person. Neither fluidity, on one hand, nor continuity and stability, on the other, need be anchored by biological blueprints or predetermined outcomes or core selves. Innateness or constitutional forces survive in these new developmental models in quite different forms. A constructionist, epigenetic account of developmental process makes for good conversation with the relational perspective.

The developmental theory I am proposing is less a rejection of existing work than a reframing or revisioning. Thelen and Smith (1991) used chaos theory to model emerging developmental capacities, as various as walking, building cognitive categories, hinking, and speaking. Their work is attentive to the fragility of human competence, its nonlinearity, its instability, its context dependency, its multiplicities.

In considering a complex phenomenon like gender to be a softly assembled system, we take up gender's meanings within any individual and familial system, along with its function and form within specific tasks in specific environments. Certainly gender could encompass behaviors that have conscious, unconscious, and social interactional properties. Gender and desire would come into their unique and particular forms only in context, context being very widely construed. Gender and sex would be inseparable from the interpersonal fields in which they are embedded. And gender and desire would not necessarily be linked in preprogrammed or obvious ways. An emergent and potentially novel interrelation of gender and desire is, in my view, more compatible with Freud's (1905) model of sexuality than with much subsequent use of psychoanalytic theories of sexuality. Recently, the implications of this point of view have been developed in psychoanalysis in the work of Muriel Dimen (1991, 1995), Diane Elise (1997, 1998), and Lynne Layton (1990) in culture studies by Eve Svedgwick (1990). Sexuality expresses and contains multiple functions: self-regulation; interpersonal regulation; distancing or bridging; conditioning safety or potential destabilization; courting excitement or danger or sealing it off. Forms and functions of desire would not have an obvious or unremarkable relationship to gender. The assemblage of gendered experience in sexual life is contingent and emergent, not pre-programmed. Desire and gender may be set up antagonistically or seem seamlessly emmeshed and obvious.

The patterns organizing and consolidating in particular forms of desire or identification could all potentially function at conscious and unconscious levels. This way of thinking would make the tomboy one among many characters about whom we make developmental stories. She could live in her variability but be less estranged from human functioning. One of the ideological distortions in conventional developmental and psychoanalytic accounts is not merely that many forms of life are declared nonnormative, but that any form of "otherness" from the central story is unfathomably other. If developmental theory is written with such wide generality and is so attuned to multiplicity and variation, forms of life we like to keep thickly bounded (gay—straight, boy—girl, sissy—tomboy, identification-desire, etc.) are more alike in their process of formation while retaining the variability of outcome.

This model of creative and constructive dynamic interaction of constitution and environment is less a rejection of the existing, rich observation of gender developments in boys or girls than it is a revisioning of these observations. At any given moment in the evolution of an understanding or theorizing of a concept like gender, one sits in a particular historical moment, drawing from the historical record of psychoanalytic work on gender a particular thread or set of threads. In a sense, anyone's organization of the complex and multiple of sources is emergent, context dependent. This organization I am presenting is no different.
Gender Made from the Body

I want to take up this tradition at the point of its inception in the first generation of women analysts. Reread now, they are striking both for the close obedience to Freud, who was in a number of cases their analyst, but also for the supple, fresh experience-near quality of the writing and for the prominent place they give to female pleasure. In this early period in psychoanalytic history, two strands of thought were initiated. One, well known to feminists, is the argument that positions femininity as an early protoform of psychic life, locatable on the girl's body. Hornay's (1926, 1934) work is the most prominent for a contemporary readership. She founded key elements of women's psychic life, envies and anxieties, in some mixture of social constraint and biology.

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Intriguing to me in the counterperspective, particularly in the writing of Lamp-de Groot (1933, 1982), is that activity and pleasure-seeking are key to a girl's pre-oedipal period. Her work may have been neglected as both feminist and neoclassical analysts moved so definitively away from phallic monism. Yet Lamp-de Groot's (1933) most elaborated essay on femininity actually struggled with a psychic bisexuality not so obviously simply rooted in anatomy. She tried, not always successfully, to make activity and passivity, psychic processes, not merely natural reactions based on gender. Strongly represented in Lamp-de Groot's work is a sense of the girl's intense, active love, bodily grounded, for her first attachment—her mother—and the narcissistic vulnerability that follows on having to give up her mother. Passivity is a reaction to injury and lost love, not a natural attribute of femininity. Lamp-de Groot was analyzed by Freud and in a retrospective revisit to her own work, Lamp-de Groot (1982) claimed Freud's imprimatur for writing about femininity from her own experience. What to make, then, of her comment later in the same paper that "it is well known that active wooing may be used to effect a passive feminine orgasm" (p. 12).

In equating both boys' and girls' anguish at having to renounce loving and being loved by one's mother, but in differentiating the intensity of renunciation required of girls and in noting that the negative oedipal can eclipse much of girls' sexuality, Lamp-de Groot illuminated an unexplored aspect of girls' gender development, that is, the rupture in homosexual attachment.

The spirit of the early feminist/suffrage upsurge, set within the progressive era, may have been a subtle or not so subtle backdrop for this generation of women analysts. Female activity was actually embraced, and the potency of renunciation of the tie to one's mother was strongly privileged. This aspect of femininity is much less prominent in theories that either install femininity as primary or focus on the ease or inevitability of same-sex identifications.

A less well-known Berlin analyst, Josine Muller (1932), was another early initiator of the primary femininity perspective. She, like Lamp-de Groot, assumed the centrality of pleasure for girls and, interestingly, expanded the notion of a female bodily sexual life rather than replacing one organ for another. Vaginal sensations, with all the accompanying anxieties and fantasies, have been her primary focus for many contemporary core femininity theorists. Muller matter-of-factly proposed, on the basis of observations and case material, that women have more than a single genital organ. She points out that urethral, clitoral, and vaginal pleasure are overlapping and not so distinguishable from one another. Rather than replacing one site of pleasure with another, she asserted that clitoral pleasure serves a girl's consolidation.

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of genital experience and that pleasure and satisfaction are essential elements in the dissolution of anyone's castration complex.

Kestenberg (1956), reviewing the early history of work on feminine sexuality, cited the Kleinians Brierley and Payne in a similar vein. They saw receptivity as an active incorporation rather than as passivity linked to masochism and considered feminine sexuality as an achievement contingent on coordination and integration of clitoral and vaginal sensation. The danger in female development, then, would have to do with the severity of renunciation of a girl's sources of pleasure. In this focus on the "negative oedipal" (for which we might be thinking of a more descriptive and apt term), the power of female desire and homosexual desire in girls and the potency of repression, from mother to daughter, comes into focus. Kestenberg (1956, 1959) at least in her early work on femininity and feminine sexuality followed this line of argument, in which the earliest forms of femininity are built on active incorporation, with the sexuality of insidens and receptivity in the service of mastery. She also connected early female depression to problems of aggression and sexuality as the tie to the mother is given up. Kestenberg (1956), like Laplanche, was drawn to the following passages in Freud's essay on da Vinci:

In his paper on Leonardo da Vinci (1910) he says: "The love of the mother for the suckling whom she nourishes and cares for is something far deeper reaching than her later affection for the growing child. It is of the nature of a fully gratified love affair, which fulfills not only the psychic wishes but also all physical needs, and when it represents one of the forms of happiness attainable by man it is due, in no little measure, to the possibility of gratifying without reproach also wish feelings which were long repressed and designated as perverse" (pp. 92-93). The reference to all bodily needs may be taken as a hint that pregenital and genital desires find fulfillment in the care of the infant. . . . The maternal bliss in caring for her infant, regardless of sex, seems dependent on the child's smallness and helplessness. Freud's remarks can be developed further to mean that mothers enjoy the care of their infants in substitution of their early repressed wishes to handle their own genitals. I suggested a similar interpretation of a mother's need for a small child, in the hypothesis that early undischarged vaginal excitations were the basic source of the girl's need for a child [pp. 268-
Keestenberg’s (1982) conception of the inner genital and her overarching project to connect gender to the female body in its specificity opened up a vital and rich vein of work on femininity and its relation to bodily life. There is work on female sexuality stressing vaginal experiences (Mayer, 1985, 1995; Bernstein, 1993), on female superego formation (Tyson, 1984; Bernstein, 1993; Tyson and Tyson, 1994), and on female gender identity emerging in relation to genital and pregenital experience Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1970; Mayer, 1985, 1995; Kaplan, 1990; Richards, 1992; Elise, 1997, 1998; Gilmore, 1998). What is fascinating about this work, aside from its clinical richness and elaboration, is the widely variable differences in the female sexual body as theorized. Fear of penetration or of closing over, diffuseness of body state, on one hand, and potent and fierce self-erasure, on the other. Vaginal hunger or vaginal terror. What dominates these distinctive approaches is a sense of femininity’s anxieties, shames, uncertainties, and often bewildering tensions. Also, the almost exclusive focus on the vagina as the designated site of femininity almost inevitably makes the female body a body primed for heterosexuality.

I identify three problems in this tradition. First, the body is treated as an unremarkable, actual phenomenon rather than a body ego emergent in the process, both intrapsychic and interpersonal, through which it is constituted. The primary femininity tradition presents a body that is raw and a mind that is cooked. The nonlinear dynamic perspective, in regard to behaviors as constitutionally driven as walking, sees mind and body as cooking each other, as bodily consciousness emerging from the particular relational, cultural, and social context in which the child lives. This perspective would not repudiate or reject the conceptualizing of femininity in terms of anxieties, shames, vulnerabilities, diffuseness, fears of penetration, or longings for penetration but, rather, embeds these psychic/somatic/sexual experiences in a matrix that is both historically and contextually placed. The realness of the body, its materiality, its presence beyond language do not default to a body before language or before social context. These are body phenomena that come into being in context, through psychic work and vice versa.

Second, there is not sufficient attention to the interpersonal dimension in the constituting of female bodies and femininity. If relational theory has ignored the body, neoclassical primary femininity theorists did not give relational phenomena any constitutive role in bodily experience. Gilmore’s (1998) intricate excavation of female bodily shame and anxiety in the context of mother-daughter handling locates the constituting of femininity in the matrix of cleaning and touching the girl, as well as the anatomical closeness of anus and genital. I would reframe what Gilmore is describing as one palpable and powerful (and largely unconscious) site of traumatic transmission. There is a kind of haunting of gender, where varieties of shame and anxiety in the mother are expressed/projected into the interaction and onto the girl’s body. Here, it seems, is a descriptive account of which social and psychic, endogenous and interpersonal live in a complex matrix out of which many different outcomes for female body ego and female subjectivity might emerge.

Third, one might raise the same question for femininity that has been asked in relation to homosexuality. Why install an adult characterization and a simple, linear time line to an experience that has nuances and subtleties, evolutions and complexity, and where the order of remembered experience may be a construction, a reorganizing of experience? It is a problem in many developmental accounts, whether of motivation or of structures like gender or personality, that the adult outcome is installed as the initiating force. Nonlinear dynamic systems and chaos theory would alternatively lead one to see that many different experiences—feeling solidly one gender continuously, variations in genderedness, demarcations like a latency tomboy identity, or multiple (gross or subtle) differences in one’s gender—would be theorized as emergent, social, and interpersonally constructed.

Among the work of modern neoclassicists, Elise’s (1997, 1998) strategy broke new ground. For one thing, her writing hark back in its freshness, directness, and articulation of female pleasure to the classical tradition of the 1920s. Longing, desire, and mastery of the body for pleasure return as key interests in her work. Her work is distinct, in tone and emphasis, from the work on core femininity that often installs anxiety and shame about sexuality as constitutive and primary. Elise preserves core gender dentity but watches a range of sexual/psychic/mental practices usually segregated as feminine play across genders. Penetration as a phenomenon of fantasy, of sexual life, of mental effort, of interpersonal relationships is one aspect of a bisexuality variously oved and feared by men and women.

Gerold Fogle’s (1998) analysis of interiority as fantasy space in men and Mark Blechner’s (1998) and Kenneth Corbett’s (1993) reconfiguring of passivity and fantasies of incorporation in men are important theoretical innovations. Like Elise, they both expand the concept of bisexuality and unlinked varieties of psychic activity from gender identifications and body-based experience as natural phenomena.

Gender in the Context of Attachment and Individuation

A new tradition in the study of gender was launched from the work of Robert Stoller (1976). This tradition draws on object relations and, in some cases, on feminist-grounded gender development in a relational

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matrix. Its clearest elaboration is in the work of Irene Fast (1985) and Jessica Benjamin (1988, 1995). Their work initiated and has provided the most articulated model of gender in which the attachments to and individuation from the mother are crucial. Fast views gender through the overlapping prisms of Freudian theory and cognitive theory and sees development as a move from overinclusion to a single-gender scheme. Benjamin's work is indebted to a discussion of questions of subjectivity and subject-object complementarity developed within philosophy and through the use of Winnicott's (1950) theory of object use and the work of aggression in relation to emotional development. The importance of Hegel's (1807) account of the master-slave relation and the complementary embeddedness of domination and submission was crucial in Benjamin's (1988) earliest accounts of the difficult trajectory for femininity toward recognition and mutuality. The power of the father as a source of identificatory love (bidirectionally) was an important element in theory of gender development. Her account of penis envy is as a failure of identification, a thwarting both of agency and subjectivity.

Benjamin's (1995) most recent writing is caught up with describing the experience of intersubjectivity, and gender per se comes somewhat in the focus on intersubjectivity. Gender, in a sense, becomes one vehicle for intersubjective transactions like complementarity and mutual recognition. Benjamin sees development as the constant tension and shifting between experiences of mutuality and experiences of splitting and alienation. Relationships of complementarity in which one person distorts or dominates the other seem most acutely the result of unbearable gender identifications in one or both of the participants. I call this work in the service of a "rights" argument in which Benjamin is interested in the interpersonal and intrapsychic processes through which one subject comes to be able to tolerate and find the subjectivity in self and in the other.

Considering this tradition from the vantage point of nonlinear dynamics and chaos theory, I identify two problems. First, the developmental story is generally told in too monolithic and too linear a fashion. The alternative perspective, from chaos theory, proposes the multiple and variable organizations of gender and sexual life that emerge in the context of specifically proscribed but also provoked and encouraged forms of being someone and loving someone. Same-sex and different-sex identifications and interactions assume a single and simply categorized identity. A number of critics have argued that these accounts of gender development remain within an understanding of normative heterosexuality (Dimen, 1995; Lesser, 1997; Magee and Miller, 1997; Layton, 1998).

Second, identification is used in too global and generic a sense. The conceptual shift I propose could begin with the application of Fast's (1985) work on event theory and I-schemes as sensorimotor and action schemes to Fast's (1984) theory of gender-category formation, over inclusion, and renunciation. Beyond seeing gender identifications as both relational patterns and body-based, the whole process of identification needs significant deconstruction. I mean by this more than simply moving away from concepts of identity founded on autonomy. Rather, identificatory processes broken down into mimeses, introjections, incorporations, and internalizations yield up an evolving experience of gender (for example) in which aspects of identity—experienced sometimes as interior, sometimes as exterior, sometimes internal, and sometimes surface—would emerge, dependent on the interactive matrix within the particular cultural and historic context of all the participants. Gender is yet another structure haunting the subject, the outcome of a complex, sometimes conscious, often unconscious transmission that comes to be housed inside/outside any individual.

The usefulness of the model of softly assembled genders to theorizing gender development in the context of attachment is illuminated by the work of Coates and her colleagues (1991) on gender identity disorder. They cast the femininity of the boys she treats as a complex interactional outcome of four factors. First, they point to parental dynamics. Here they are interested primarily in what we might term the gender identity disorders in the parents and family, often expressed in the unconscious wishes and needs of the adults in the family system, played out in the meanings they assign and perceive in the child's gender. Second, there is a particular sensitivity and reactivity in that child that seems constitutionally given. These two factors then coincide with two others: the appearance of a crisis in the primary figure of attachment and a critical point in the construction or consolidation of gender.

I want to highlight the relational nature of the crisis Coates and her colleagues describe and to deconstruct the term constitution. The material conditions of the child—the body, the sensory apparatus, the responsive capacities, the child's thresholds of reaction—are certainly elements in the constitutional contributions the child brings to the primary relationships of attachment and identification. These material conditions, the physiological substrate of the child's functioning, are the raw material of parental fantasy in respect to gender and parental need for attachment from the child.

The body and psyche of the child operate as projection sites, material body forms made meaningful within the parents' psychic meaningful within the parents' psychic meaning.
particular interactive matrix. A child's intense responsiveness, the lowered threshold to stimuli of all kinds, is made meaningful by construing the child as empathic, attuned, or creative. In our particular cultural setting, that attunement so available and so meaningful to the parent is almost emblematic of the feminine. Thus the sensitivity of a boy in this matrix could become coded as an aspect of his feminization and perhaps from both sides of the relationship—parent and child—a necessary element to the management of the parent's crisis and suffering. Corrigan and Gordon (1955) make this point in their study of how ego precocity in children serves to bolster collapsing or inadequate parental psyches.

A girl's response to a comparable crisis in her primary parent might be similarly to use her bodily, sensory, and perceptual experiences to sustain the demoralized or shaken identity of the mother. Perhaps a tomboy self in this regard would enliven and excite, perhaps carry for the mother her own lost phallic identifications, perhaps replace a disappointing mate. The particular outcome would be understood only through a process of elaborating both the maternal fantasy about the child and the integration he made of that fantasy as it was communicated consciously and unconsciously. In an early rapprochement tomboy we may see the living evidence of fantasies, shared and unshared, conscious and unconscious, between parent and child.

The use of bodily gender style and self-state in reaction to a relational crisis would have both immediate and profound as well as long-range consequences for the body ego emerging in this child. This constitutional feature, both always inherent and constructed in the relational matrix, may be one of those features that later in development become "postdated," to use Butler's (1990) term, that is, retrospectively constructed as "gendered" by child and by parent.

The child's talent, if you will, for mimesis, a byproduct of his sensory sensitivity and acuity, may potentiate projective identification by the parent, adhesive identification (Mitrani, 1996) by the child, and a quasiparental, quasi-imaginary holding environment for the fragile parent. Will all traumatic situations, from the universal experience of loss and separation to the particular premature abandonments and devastating injuries to which a child can be subjected, require some degree of incorporates fantasy or mimetic identification? And is gender one of the plastic and flexible sites in which such fantasy and transmission can occur?

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My patient A speaks about the long history of her tomboy self, from childhood play to a strong connection first to a caretaker's husband and then to her father. Boy-self was a caretaker of others, a kind of guardian soldier. This experience dominated her attempts to care for her mother who appeared overwhelmed by her family and exhaustingly depressed. A also saw herself as keeping alive the hope for an artistic life, abandoned by her mother upon A's marriage. She holds to this fantasy despite her mother's explicit disavowals of any interest in her career. In a kind of strange but understandable compromise, A embodies the intention to succeed in the arts but feels too blocked actually to have such a life.

Coates has been interested in the transgenerational transmission of trauma. This phenomenon, the haunting of an individual by ghosts, demons, and losses transmitted in some way well below the radar screens of conscious reflection, may find in the structures of gender a particularly vivid and well-elaborated host. I think of the "haunting of gender" (Abraham and Torok, 1994) in a wide variety of experiences of gender development, lived out as aspects of incorporated (rather than fully internalized and metabolized) experience of the gender meanings of self and of other and of self in relation to other.

Drawing on the model of softly assembled behavioral attractors, we may see that gender, while diagnostically and perhaps socially problematic, is a vehicle for a particular skillful task that a child needs to resolve, namely, the securing of stable interactions and internal stability in another person. Some aspects of gender identification may indeed be the only available skill for such a task in such an environment. Gender may be the preeminent site of this type of relational negotiation because of its social and familial salience as well as its potential for malleability and fantasy.

The difficulties for the child may be less in the realm of gender nonconformity than in the intensity of the cannibalization of the child's body and self for parental need. Such difficulties may stem from the child's need for attunement or from the parent's need or the child as an object to merge with or for that child as a container for the parent's dissociated self-states. A, who despairs of anyone being interested in a girl, fits this developmental story. While her tomboy persona gives her great vitality and is a most imaginative and creative self-state, she has also paid a great price in developing any sense that her energy and agency can be mobilized on her own behalf.

From these extreme situations, one may say emergencies of gender, we might extrapolate to see all gender and body ego gender constructions as forms of compromise formation. Parents' fantasies about a child's gender would draw on and be structured through their own experience of gender, the power and dangers of their own desires,

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and the prohibitions through which desire is installed and elaborated. The unique dialectic in any parent's experience of body, gender identity and desire, as well as how and why these experiences are linked or dissociated, contribute to the interactive intersubjective experience in which the child comes into his or her own understanding of these dynamics.

"Masculinity" in Women

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One of the difficulties of both the gender/body accounts of femininity and the identificatory attachment-based accounts is that the presence of bisexual forms of identity and all the intricately nuanced elements of masculinity, androgyny (itself a complex phenomenon) and femininity remain too single valued and too simply described.

Perhaps some tomboys can push the envelope, transgress and yet remain with some access to power, because the tomboy habiats a valued identity and one less feared than femininity. She contains less of the regressive pull of the fully feminine, less the preoedipal mother—Artemis not Medusa. And Minerva and Artemis, those active, hunting, thinking boy/girls were not mothers.

Masculinity in women has been viewed as a defensive identification with the father, a foreclosing of oedipal disappointments, or competitive rivalry with the father. Desire and identifications are made distinct and oppositional. Within French neo-classical theory (McDougall, 1980), masculine identification can be seen as refusal of difference so that masculinity in a woman is a quasi-schizy and perverse refusal of reality, one that paradoxically acknowledges and refuses paternal power.

Masculine protest and penis envy are in one sense different psychic solutions to a common problem, the difficulties many women feel in sustaining and integrating experiences of agency and potency as gender syntonic. An idealized masculinity may be lived as an internal state (masculine protest) or be projected and disavowed into a male body or male psyche (penis envy). Even as bedrock a concept as penis envy begins to deconstruct, to sag under the demand to carry more theoretical and conceptual weight than even a penis can carry. Maria Torok (1970) saw penis envy as an aspect of idealization of masculinity and as a projective identification in order to remain loyal to the mother. Idealizing masculinity maintains the division between phallic and castrated and keeps mother and daughter together but on the losing side. A tomboy, protesting and enbying, may be, at the same time, accepting and refusing the divide. What differentiates a tomboy from the character Annie Reich (1953) theorized in her paper on women who realize phallic aims and ideals through alliance with an intense...

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But secret identification with a highly phallic man? Such a woman is engaged in a kind of projective identification, disavowing but secretly vicariously indulging masculine potency, even if idealized and mostly in fantasy.

In the most highly developed feminist revision of this concept, Benjamin (1988) views penis envy as a compensatory attempt to solve problems of separation and rapprochement as the vapor trail of a two-way inability of father and daughter to work out experiences of identity as subjects and agents. But as O’Connor and Ryan (1993) have noted, this analysis never takes up the question of sexuality or questions the heterosexual underpinnings to the theory. Agency and recognition are endowed through the other such that female subjectivity is still within a masculine cast. And masculinity still comes from the father.

It is in the synergy of feminism, relational theory, and postmodernist thought that the whole binary system of gender is addressed and critiqued (Flax, 1990; Dimen, 1991, 1995; Golnder, 1991; Harris, 1991, 1997). From this point of view, the rigidity and overdetermination of these binaries, like barnacles to a ship, accrue to the gender binary are put in question. Sprung oose from these binaries, gender practices and sexual practices then come to be multifunctional, often in the service of relational as well as intrapsychic needs and agendas. The focus on performance in postmodernism is perhaps misunderstood as acting, role playing, the voluntary assumption of a gender role. But the powerful insights into performance in postmodernism create a paradoxical situation in which "masculinity" is both socially constructed and deeply lived, ironic, and passionate—and certainly rarely voluntary. Both at the level of theory and in individual experience the binary gender system is at this historical moment both necessary and inadequate.

To begin think about the question of gender as a site of multiplicity and gendered life as multiply sexual is to take on several questions. First, there is the question of language. Corbett (1993) has been arguing that femininity in gay men is not identical to emininity in a woman. Surely this claim must be correct in a variety of directions. The relative integration of genderedness in any person might be like Sedgwick's (1990) model of gender as a solution of varying saturation or like any compound variously an amulsion, sedimented, well mixed, or multilayered. Language is one crucial aspect of a multiply imagined model of gender.

It might be useful to explore not the role of language in gender experience, but the role of speech, specifically the practice of naming or not naming one's experience. I think we need a more careful and complex understanding of what a category is, how it is built, and how complex, contradictory, and multiply configured the categories used...

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To describe gender will turn out to be. Clearly, in the relational matrices in which gender will be configured, expressed, and taken in, gender designations like boy or girl are more than cognitive categories. There are complex and multiple relationships that category knowledge has to bodily awareness and the representation of genitals. Body schemas, including the experience of genitals, interrelate with gender consciousness in evolving and nonlinear ways. Psychoanalytic theory has focused on noting the press of the body on representation, but, as I have been arguing, it is as important to see the impact of representation on body scheme.

Edelman's (1987) work on category knowledge is an interesting application of his conception of neural modeling. He sees categories as degenerative, recombinant, and not susceptible to reified and unassailable meaning systems but, rather, as evolving in the social/intellectual process of thinking, speaking, and interaction. This idea is developed in the work of Lakoff and Johnson (1999) on representation and metaphor. They present a number of interesting ideas about categories that could be usefully applied...
to our knowledge of and clinical experience with gender categories. Categories are not fixed, simple structures. They are evolving, unfixed; they often have uncertain and shifting boundaries and often are centered on or clustered around some prototype effect or conception that emerges from the human interactions in which the term or category name is being applied. A categorization like girl or boy then arises in a social matrix and out of embodied experience. Just as bodily forms, positions, and ways of moving carry local conventions of gender, so speech has genres, styles, vernaculars, and idiiosyncratic meanings through which experiences of gender as a body/psyche/social experience are conveyed. Whether you self-describe as tomboy, boy, butch, androgynous, what those category terms signify requires local decoding and deconstruction.

Lakoff and Johnson (1999) restore an action-based, image-based, and bodily element to all cognitive categories, thus positioning a linguistic term like gender at the nexus of social, bodily, and emotional life. Their work on category types could be very suggestive for psychoanalysts and clinicians involved in trying to understand how the same terms live in such profoundly distinct representational universes, across clinical dyads, and indeed within any system of collective dialogues. For example, the concept of a “radial” category has a potentially rich impact on our clinical thinking. Radial categories have a central prototype, a typical representation, and also a stereotypical representation and a number of related meanings. Some of these meanings have local interpretations, and some are specific to particular historical periods. All are “conventionalized variations which cannot be predicted from generalized rules” (Lakoff, 1987, p. 84). A number of the radial categories Lakoff analyzes and unpacks are gender terms: mother and bachelor, for example. This approach to gender categories could enrich our understanding of the interpenetration of the body, psyche, and relational matrix.

Another issue of importance is how to think about the relation of gender and sexuality. There is a long tradition of discounting all ofms of desire to masculinity, a variant of phallic monism but with a strong essentialist bent. Freud left the liberatory potential of the “Three Essays” (Freud, 1905) when he made an inevitable hinge between identification and gender, masculinity coming to mean the pursuit of a female object (see, e.g., Chodorow, 1992). I am indebted to the work of O’Connor and Ryan (1993) and to Wiege and Miller (1997) in deconstructing Freudian and neo-Freudian work on sexuality, which consistently assumed a masculine character to libido. Desire for and by a woman takes up habitation in the masculine position.

The tomboy, who may be gay or straight, whose doubleness of identity may masquerade or display, may be a wedge into the apparently seamless connection of gender and desire. If sexual arrangements involve constructed genders, constructed body egos in layers of identity both conscious and unconscious, then terms like homosexual and heterosexual, gender category names like boy, gir, man, and woman, do not, except as specific practices or as political structures, have much inherent purchase in theory. Both butch and straight tomboys may live in an erotic world of imaginary or actual boys or girls, men and women. Sexual life may be homosexual or heterosexual in internal fantasy, and fantasy may replicate or defy the lived gendered sexual arrangements. The tomboy’s erotic possibilities, unisexual or bisexual, organized around particular practices, actually plunge us back to the radial features of Freud’s (1905) essays on sexuality, in which erotic experience is linguistic in the sense of drawing on grammars in which subject, object, and verb (in Freud’s terms, sexual aim) exist in many sentence forms. We then have to move to some other way of accounting for pathology and symptomatology.

There is little conceptual space for bisexuality in most psychoanalytic theorizing about gender and, perhaps more intriguingly, little space between the sexual categories. Ellsler (1997, 2000) is concerned that bisexuality is a hypothetical construct in psychoanalytic theory, one that is seldom elaborated at the level of clinical theory. Too often, bisexuality is a provisional transitional space to be renounced in various ways. Perhaps it would be helpful to reintroduce an old idea in psychoanalysis—that nothing once desired or brought into a relation of attachment and longing is ever fully relinquished. So many of the developmental stories in gender theory use the language of psychic sculpting. Elements of the self are foreclosed, repudiated, disidentified in a kind of psychic Bauhaus aesthetic, “less is more.”

Butler’s (1990, 1993) work is crucial here in noting the melancholic elements in identity carried through incomplete mourning, ost attachments, and lost loves. All remain elements in the internal world, whether supported or unsupported by psychic and interpersonal and social structures. A tomboy may carry aspects of her identity as a melancholic, unloved aspect of her mother’s or her father’s ideal love. Or in her foreclosure relation to the feminine, we might find the unloved elements in a homosexual love or masculine persona connected to either her mother or her father. The distinction Abraham and Torok (1984) make between mourning and melancholia as a distinction among types of internalization is intriguing. Incorporation, in their particular reading of hat term, because of its concrete fantasy and its corporeality, signifies a loss still partially disavowed, not yet metabolized into one’s own subjectivity. Gesture, mimetically copied styles of being, is laced with this melancholic aspect.

This kind of complex potential for the fates and consequences of desires and identity is possible if one unyokes gender from body and from desire. Chodorow’s (1976, 1992) current work on heterosexuality clarifies how rarely psychoanalysis has problematized heterosexuality. Gender development, recast in the terms of chaos theory as a “soft assembly,” puts on an equal plane of possibility negative and positive oedipal identifications, active and passive sexual aims, and multiple and complex characterizations of parental objects and selfobjects.

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Conclusion

Some of the tomboys, stories in this article are stories of transcendence and play and some are stories of danger and loss. The contradictions between play and rigidity are evident. Tomboyhood, tomboy life, and tomboy love may operate in many ways: tomboy as outlaw and as conformist, tomboy as symptom and as developmental solution. Gender sickness exists in the culture and in individuals. Gender and desire, and their varied arrangements, can be used to cast in a set of narratives of great flexibility. Much contemporary theory and many accounts of personal witness show us that many factors in social and personal life constric and forbid and flatten developmental possibilities. It is essential that developmental theory not naively or unconsciously or moralistically reflect as natural or inevitable the forms of regulation and straitjacketing that historical forces so willingly provide and insist on. The tomboys’ stories told through the prism of feminism, of relational theory, and of chaos theory are a venture in that direction.

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